



COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee convened in a regular meeting on Monday, January 13, 2014 at 301 W. Second Street, Room #1101, Austin, Texas.

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Mayor Pro Tem Cole (Chair)
Council Member Morrison
Council Member Riley

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Cole called the Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee meeting to order at 2:07 p.m.

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION

No citizen signed up to speak.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

February 3, 2014 – Approved the January 13, 2014, minutes on a 2-0 vote with Council Member Morrison off the dais.

3. UPDATE ON THE IMPROVEMENTS OF THE SHOAL CREEK TRAIL GAP PROJECT

Ms. Kerri Juarez, Assistant Director, Public Works, discussed the purpose of this project is to provide an ADA compliant bicycle and pedestrian trail to “close the gap” in the Shoal Creek Trail between 3rd Street and 5th Street. The other scopes of work included in the project are relocation of a wastewater line out of Shoal Creek, streambank stabilization using reinforces wall structures, bicycle and pedestrian bridge spanning shoal creek from 4th street at Rio Grande to the former Energy Control Center, Austin Energy chilled water lines on the proposed bridge and trail lighting.

The managing department is Public Works and the sponsor departments are Public Works Neighborhood Connectivity Division, Watershed Protection, Parks and Recreation, Austin Water Utility and Austin Energy. The design engineer is HNTB.

The conflict with the Austin Energy (AE) manhole is that AE provides network service to Downtown area via a system of vaults, conduit and manholes. An AE manhole is located in the area of the proposed bike/pedestrian bridge. In early September 2013, AE raised the existing ingress/egress to the manhole. This was done to address issues of safety, security and accessibility for maintenance. Once the issues with the manhole location were discovered, AE worked with the project team to find solutions to address the situation. The raised vault is now in conflict with the proposed bike/pedestrian bridge.

During the months of September and October a number of meetings were held to try to resolve the conflict. The following options were analyzed: relocating AE vault which would cost at least \$2M and take approximately 18 months, moving the vault opening to a corner of the vault to mitigate conflict –would reduce the accessibility for maintenance and is not acceptable to AE, removing the pike/ped bridge from this phase of the project to accomplish in future phase would require burying the chilled water lines in 5th street and West Avenue, which is extremely congested and may not be feasible. If feasible, would cost approximately \$1M and take approximately 1 year. Removing heritage tree on east bank of Shoal Creek and shifting the bridge to avoid conflict – removal of heritage tree is not desirable and reducing the bridge width from 16' to 12' to avoid conflict not desirable due to reduced capacity. The project team determined that reducing the bridge width from 16' to 12' is the only feasible option. Useable width of bridge will be 10'.

The current status and next steps are HNTB was directed to redesign bridge to 12' width, final construction documents were submitted for permitting and other reviews in December, project is scheduled to advertise for bids in early February, bids scheduled to open in mid-March and construction scheduled to start in April.

Council Member Riley, asked about the completion date?

Ms. Juarez, stated it's a nine month project so if work starts in April it will be completed January, 2015.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, the Shoal Creek project involves more than just the vault and asked staff to provide information on how the entire project is coming along?

Ms. Juarez, stated we are ready to advertise next month and the drawings are in for permit review and the design itself is complete.

Mr. Robert Brennes, stated in regards to the lighting itself they are going to mimic the light standings at the new library, lighting underneath the bridge, pole standing lighting.

Ms. Juarez, added as of yet it is not determined who will pay the monthly bill for the lighting but will figure out before pulling the meter.

Council Member Riley, added that he wanted to make sure this project goes forward because it has been a challenging project and very excited now that we are getting close to completion in 2015.

Mr. Ted asked the question about the Shoal Creek project being completed in 2015 and if this was directed to the bridge or the entire project itself?

Mr. Brennes, stated we are speaking of the entire project, which will be a manufactured bridge.

Council Member Morrison, committed that it is exciting to see this project moving forward.

Council Member Morrison, asked for an example of a 12' bridge versus a 10' bridge?

Mr. Brennes, stated the Waller Creek Bridge on 4th street east of the Convention Center is an example of a 12' bridge.

4. PRESENTATION ON DISTRACTED DRIVING, TEXTING WHILE DRIVING BAN

Ms. Bianca Bentzin, Division Chief, City of Austin Law Department, discussed the current Distracted Driving Ordinance which was passed in 2009, covered at the time what it needed to. Now, that technology has advanced so far it does not cover the nearly dangerous behavior going on with drivers now.

The current ordinance only addresses texting while driving, it exempts from the law, dialing a phone call and using your phone as a GPS.

Council Member Morrison, commented that the Council Members have had a lot of discussion about this item and wanted to respond to Ms. Bentzin statement, of our ordinance is only texting as opposed to distracted driving and that our ordinance allows wireless communication.

Ms. Bentzin, stated that is how the ordinance look but what we have now, is how it will start playing out in the court, how it is interpreted by Judges and juries.

Council Member Morrison, stated she fully endorse there are expansions to the ordinance even considering hands-free only.

Ms. Bentzin, stated when she reviewed the laws from the other cities and states now their detailed definition sections are very precise. The Law Department recommend changes for current Austin City Code to address what they are hearing from Judges, to expand the ordinance to address electronic devices as opposed to limiting to wireless communication devices, have more detailed definitions regarding the unsafe and illegal conduct, anticipate future issues of having the device on the lap, address young drivers (if you are under 18 and receive a ticket for distracting driving, it's an enhanced penalty in opposed to over 18) and consider passing a "hands-free" law. The bottom line is to see an ordinance that basically says keep two hands on the wheel.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked how the Courts outside of Austin are handling this issue?

Ms. Bentzin, stated she is not sure what specific Court rulings are going on. The summary of her research so far consist of who has laws and who doesn't. Whose have changed over the years and gotten more detailed. In regards to the local Court agencies we can get that information if that what we need.

Council Member Morrison, thanked Ms. Bentzin for bringing this item to CPT. Also, stated that from her perspective upgrading and updating the ordinance to be more inclusive now that we have a better understanding of technology. But, if we were to go to hands-free only that is a conversation we should have. Maybe have an explorative resolution and have staff to put these recommendations out to the communities and other commissions and have them to come forward with the responses they receive to these recommendations. How we should update it and the pros and the cons of completely hands-free.

5. UPDATE ON "IMAGINE AUSTIN" THE WAY FORWARD 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Paul Digiuseppe, Principal Planner, Planning and Development Review, provided an update since Imagine Austin has been adopted in June, 2012. Some of the major highlights from 2013 were the implementation program, community engagement, internal alignment, regulations, public investment and partnerships. Continued engagement with the communities, speaker series, compact and connected training, online outreach, website, social media, YouTube channel, city shaping news, imagine Austin news and reaching out to the public as well with on-line training.

We are getting closer to completing the neighborhood plans for the original neighborhood planning area and in about 2 months you will be receiving the plan for the South Austin combined neighborhood plan, which is the first plan to be initiated post adoption of Imagine Austin. Also, we have partnerships with other initiatives to help us move forward on those items the city alone can't do.

We put together priority programs and within those programs developed eight priority teams consisting of other departments, sharing their values and issues that will help better address issues and concerns. The first priority program is invest in Compact and Connected which is co-led by the Public Works Department and Transportation (ATD) which includes, revision of subdivision Code & Transportation Criteria Manual, advancing bicycle and sidewalk master plans, implementation of great streets master plan, implementation of corridor improvements, facilitation of redevelopment in activity centers, support of an integrated transportation system by ATD and reinvestment in aging infrastructure in the urban core.

The next grouping is Nature and City (Sustainably Manage Water Resources) which is related to City initiatives and is co-led by Austin Water and Watershed Protection. This grouping pertains to water management, facilitation of auxiliary water use, monitoring creek health, revision of Watershed Protection Ordinance and update on Watershed Master Plan.

The next grouping is Creative Economy which is led by Economic Growth and Development, which is related to City initiatives and accomplishments. The investment in the creative economy, capacity building and workforce development, cultivation of cultural and heritage tourism, activation of public space and art space market survey report. The last grouping is Healthy and Affordable. The household affordability consist of the funding and supportive housing units, review of affordable housing policy, development of a downtown density program and development of real-time affordable housing database. The Healthy Austin which is led by our Health and Human Resources Department. Healthy Austin is looking at the expansion of parks within walking distance, expansion of community gardens and coordination of garden-related education and outreach events, acquisition, design and development of parks and promotion of tobacco-free plants.

Moving forward PDRD feels we need to continue defining centers and corridors and focus more this year on growing our external partnerships because most of the first years the focus was on the internal partnerships and now feel those partnerships are solid. Also, focus on broadening our outreach efforts and do some things we did not do last year.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, thanked Mr. Digiuseppe for the presentation and stated it has been away since the committee has had an update from Imagine Austin.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked about the statement of having a number of additional partners you would like to add, please give an example of who that would be?

Mr. Digiuseppe, stated at this stage a plan is still being developed but stated there are opportunities out there that they may not be taking advantage of.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked if we have a partnership with any of the schools?

Mr. Digiuseppe, stated in regards to art education we have the art education initiative.

Council Member Morrison, stated with reaching out to other partners, she is part of the Joint Sub-Committee with the County, School, Mayor, Council Member Tovo and other elected officials. For the past three years their focus has been on joint use facilities. The next meeting they will discuss about putting together a joint-use staff committee to go along with the joint-use elected officials to talk about shared use facilities.

Council member Morrison, asked about slide #11 of Code Next and Rewrite of the Land Development Code and asked about getting by-monthly updates from staff of how the process is going?

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, stated that was a good idea and maybe have staff to come present quarterly.

ADJOURMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Cole adjourned the meeting with no objection at 3:18 p.m.